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UNHCR's INSPECTION AND EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

(submitted by the High Commissioner)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Since the forty-fifth session of the Executive Committee in October 1994, the evaluation function in UNHCR has undergone important changes. The creation of a post of Director, Inspection and Evaluation Service (the Inspector), was approved by the Executive Committee during that session (A/AC.96/839, para.24 (m)). This change, first proposed at the 19 May 1993 meeting of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters (EC/1993/SC.2/CRP.9), was to "provide the High Commissioner with an additional management tool which is flexible, independent, and directly responsible to her." The Inspection and Evaluation Service became operational in March 1995.

2. The newly formed service has undertaken three inspection exercises, in Nepal, Cameroon and Nigeria, during late spring and summer 1995. Four additional inspection exercises are planned in 1995. As for the recently completed exercises, they will address both policy and programme issues and UNHCR's performance and accountability.

3. While the consolidation of the evaluation and inspection functions is likely to result in a shift of emphasis towards field operations reviews in future work programmes, evaluation activities have continued as planned during the 1994-1995 period. Studies completed during that period have included a comprehensive review of UNHCR resettlement policy and practice, and an analysis of the

cross-mandate approach in Ethiopia. A global assessment of the Office's policy and practice regarding urban refugees has also been initiated. In addition, evaluation staff have conducted operational reviews of UNHCR's activities in Tajikistan, in the southern Caucasus, and in Somalia in the context of the cross-border operation launched from Kenya. An evaluation of the Mozambique repatriation operation is currently being finalized.

4. Progress on two additional evaluation exercises requested by the Executive Committee during its forty-fifth session was reported at the June meeting of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters. In so doing, UNHCR presented to the Sub-Committee a conference room paper on the "lessons learnt" from the Rwanda emergency. The Office also produced a summary evaluation of the Women Victims of Violence project in Kenya. A detailed project review is under completion.

II. THE INSPECTION AND EVALUATION SERVICE

5. The Inspection and Evaluation Service is organized along the lines of the proposal the High Commissioner presented to the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters in September 1994 (EC/SC.2/70 and Corr.1). The Service is located in the Executive Office, and is headed by a D-2 level Director (the Inspector) who reports directly to the High Commissioner. It is staffed by one Principal Officer, three Senior Officers and three General Service personnel.

6. As stated in the proposal, the Inspection and Evaluation Service is to undertake "rigorous and comprehensive reviews of UNHCR's operational activities and their impact in given countries and regions, focusing particularly on those factors, both internal and external to the organization, deemed essential to the effective and efficient achievement of organizational objectives." The Inspector will also review issues that had not been previously systematically addressed, such as the overall quality of UNHCR's representation, the living and working environment of UNHCR personnel, and, in particular, staff morale and security. While focusing primarily on operations, the Service may also review entities at Headquarters to assess their effectiveness in providing support to the field. In addition, the Service continues to undertake the type of 'lessons learnt' studies, sectoral reviews and specific activity assessments previously undertaken by the Central Evaluation Section. Upon receiving report from the Inspector, the High Commissioner determines the distribution of the observations and recommendations and the follow-up actions required. An annual summary report of the Inspector's work is to be presented to the regular session of the Executive Committee by the High Commissioner.

7. A first review undertaken by the Inspector in Nepal, was prompted by the absence of foreseeable durable solutions for the refugees in that country. The inspection examined programme and policy issues as well as UNHCR's performance in such crucial areas as resources management and quality of representation. In Cameroon, the mission reviewed the prospects for the establishment of refugee legislation as well as potential durable solutions for different refugee groups. In

addition, it examined the office's administration and the living conditions of UNHCR staff. In Nigeria, the mission assessed the protection role of UNHCR and prospects for durable solutions. Management and staffing of the office, as well as security and living conditions were also reviewed.

III. COMPLETED EVALUATIONS

A. Resettlement policy and practice

8. Generous policies, especially in the 1970s and early 1980s with large-scale Indo-Chinese resettlement, have led to "compassion fatigue" amongst the resettlement countries. Economic recession, large flows of asylum-seekers and growing xenophobia have contributed to reinforcing the international community's preference for the voluntary repatriation of refugees. A review of resettlement policy and practice provided an in-depth appraisal of UNHCR's resettlement efforts and included a comprehensive set of recommendations.

9. The evaluation report concluded that, despite decreasing needs, resettlement has remained an important durable solution. Current demands require more rapid and detailed responses, and are more difficult to fulfil with the limited resources now available within UNHCR for such activities. Shifting away from the processing of large homogeneous caseloads has made resettlement work less routine while requiring careful, labour-intensive, case-by-case assessments. UNHCR's operational capacity for resettlement will, therefore, require substantial strengthening to adequately meet new challenges.

10. In the course of the review, the evaluation team also noted that most resettlement countries give considerable importance to the resettlement of refugees. Concerned Governments are eager to engage in regular consultations with the Office and are looking increasingly for UNHCR to lead the way in identifying refugees in need of resettlement.

11. On the issue of UNHCR's role in resettlement countries, the report recognized the importance of promoting the Office's resettlement priorities. It suggested that UNHCR develop a framework for integrating fund-raising and public information strategies with resettlement activities in major resettlement countries. UNHCR should also increase cooperation and information-sharing with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and refugee and ethnic associations. In addition, the evaluation recommended that the Office work closely with Governments to design proper mechanisms for accelerating the acceptance of cases identified by UNHCR.

12. The main conclusions of the report have been presented by UNHCR to the Governments and NGOs of the major resettlement countries.

B. The cross-mandate approach in Ethiopia

13. Faced with a complex humanitarian crisis in Ethiopia in 1991-1992, UNHCR has articulated and become the principal advocate of an innovative strategy for aiding refugees and returnees labelled the "cross-mandate approach". Following extensive inter-organizational consultations, the approach has become the stated

policy and programme framework for displacement emergencies within Ethiopia. The review undertaken in 1994 was intended to identify and analyse the main components of the cross-mandate approach. The report examined how its guiding principles have influenced the planning and the implementation of assistance programmes in an operational environment characterized by the diversity and interrelation of the populations' needs.

14. The evaluation concluded that the pragmatic course of action that developed into the cross-mandate approach has enabled UNHCR to maximize the use of limited resources to achieve greater equity of assistance to mixed beneficiary populations. It also reduced the dependency of the displaced and refugees on camp-based services, and has encouraged communities to organize themselves to benefit from self-help and development activities. With regard to cooperation, the review noted that all parties involved have deployed considerable efforts to show operational flexibility. Regular field consultations have involved United Nations agencies, NGOs and government structures.

15. The report demonstrated that, rather than a specific programme, the cross-mandate approach is a framework for action based on four central notions. First, assistance to the displaced should be a collaborative inter-organizational effort drawing on pooled resources and expertise. Second, assistance should address root causes rather than merely meet relief needs. Third, aid should be provided on the basis of need rather than on the categorization of recipients. Fourth, assistance should be provided in communities through community structures rather than as individual packages in relief camps.

C. The Kenya-Somalia cross-border operation

16. The cross-border operation from Kenya into Somalia has been widely regarded as one of the more innovative programmes recently undertaken by UNHCR. Planned in spring 1992, the operation aimed at stabilizing the Somali communities in their country to curtail the refugee influx to Kenya. UNHCR planners also hoped to prevent further influxes and to establish in Somalia conditions conducive to the voluntary repatriation of refugees. An evaluation of the cross-border operation was completed in the last quarter of 1994, analysing its impact and effectiveness and drawing lessons applicable to such operations in the future.

17. The review concluded that the operation succeeded in quickly stemming the flow of refugees from the Somali region of Gedo into Kenya. It also achieved its prevention objectives and brought relative stability to the region. Less than two years after the beginning of the operation, most of the refugees who had crossed into north-eastern Kenya had returned to Somalia.

18. Furthermore, the impact of UNHCR's cross-border activities on Somali communities has been immediate. The choice of quick impact projects (QIPs) as rehabilitation tools has allowed the operation's planners to act with speed and flexibility. While the rehabilitation effects of the programme were not instantly perceptible, QIPs have quickly attracted the attention of Somali populations, whether refugees, displaced persons or residents, and prompted the spontaneous return of many of the uprooted.

19. With regard to the future of the cross-border operation, the report pointed out that while a strategy based on QIPs may have been successful in promoting repatriation to the predominantly rural Gedo Region, economic, social and security conditions in the coastal areas remain different and may call for a different approach.

D. UNHCR activities in Tajikistan

20. UNHCR's activities in Tajikistan have generated widespread interest and discussion within the Office. Much of the interest is due to the extent to which the operation encapsulates the main operational approaches UNHCR is striving to adopt in its activities throughout the world. Furthermore, the former Soviet Union is a new and important area to UNHCR. The review completed during summer 1994 proposed to analyse the innovative approaches followed in Tajikistan as well as to assess their effectiveness and impact.

21. The evaluation noted that one of the most progressive elements of the operation was UNHCR's contribution to stability and security in Tajikistan. This has been achieved through a combination of presence, mediation and traditional protection activities. The provision of material assistance in the form of an important shelter programme enabled UNHCR to increase substantially its influence and facilitate its action.

22. The review also concluded, however, that one major weakness of the international community in Tajikistan has been the United Nations' inability to develop an integrated operational response. As a consequence, UNHCR has been compelled to assume a much larger share of the operation than originally planned. The report observed that the absence of an integrated response has prevented UNHCR from preparing the transition from relief to development which would have allowed for a timely downscaling of its involvement. The report recommended that UNHCR step up efforts to identify a sustainable alternative to its presence and commence a gradual scale-down of the operation.

23. Following the evaluation, consultations with non-governmental as well as with multilateral organizations were expanded. UNHCR was able to hand over some of its activities, in particular human rights monitoring, which will be now assumed by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and mediation with local authorities, which is to be assumed by the United Nations Military Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT).

E. UNHCR activities in the Caucasus

24. In the course of the past three years, UNHCR has become strongly involved in assisting uprooted populations in Armenia, Azerbaijan and in Georgia. The resumption, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, of dormant ethnic strife, has resulted in the forced displacement within the region of more than 1.3 million persons. Upon requests from the international community, UNHCR has provided relief in various forms to more than one million persons. Faced with strategic questions, the Office has requested a review of UNHCR activities in the Caucasus to identify future policy options. The review was conducted at the beginning of 1995.

25. The review concluded that UNHCR's relief activities have produced a significant impact on the welfare of the uprooted populations, whether refugees or internally displaced persons, in all three countries of the region. In addition, UNHCR programmes have undoubtedly contributed to the stabilization of the displaced in areas where local integration could be envisaged. Secondary flows that could have further threatened the fragile social fabric of these new States have also been prevented. Considering the improvements achieved in the three countries, the review noted the need for a change of emphasis from emergency relief to rehabilitation and pre-development activities.

26. The evaluation suggested that, in view of questions surrounding the legal status of the uprooted populations in the Caucasus, the Office should engage cautiously and selectively in General Programme activities. The review pointed out that UNHCR should actively seek the involvement of other agencies in rehabilitation activities, but noted the lack of readily available partners.

27. The review concluded that, in addition to direct assistance activities, a longer-term UNHCR strategy in the region could aim at developing contingency planning with the region's Governments as well as at promoting institution-building and technical preparedness. The evaluation also noted the cautious response of the international community to the consolidated appeals launched by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

IV. SPECIAL ASSIGNMENTS

28. At the 16 January 1995 meeting of the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters, a proposal was endorsed formally that UNHCR should, inter alia, conduct an internal "lessons learnt" exercise on the Rwanda emergency operation, as well as a study by the Central Evaluation Section of recurring lessons from recent emergencies which would take into account the findings of the Rwanda exercise. On 20 June, UNHCR reported to the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters that the exercise had been undertaken by the Inspection and Evaluation Service. A summary of the lessons learnt from the Rwanda emergency was presented in document EC/1995/SC.2/CRP.21. The comprehensive workshop, postponed since earlier in the year, has not taken place in view of continuing instability in the Great Lakes Region which has made it impossible to withdraw all key staff at the same time. In order, however, to ensure prompt application of lessons learnt from the Rwanda Emergency a comprehensive, action-oriented internal report is currently under preparation.

29. In the formulation of its Conclusions on Refugee Women and Refugee Children, the Executive Committee endorsed a request from the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters to undertake a results-based evaluation of the Women Victims of Violence project in Kenya (A/AC.96/839, para.22 (d)). A summary report was presented to the Sub-Committee on Administrative and Financial Matters in June 1995 (EC/1995/SC.2/CRP.22). The review concluded that the Women Victims of Violence project in Kenya "has shown UNHCR's capacity to give the required attention

to the protection and assistance needs of refugee women". The project has also illustrated the overall positive effects of gender-sensitive work on refugee populations and has demonstrated the practical relevance of UNHCR's policy on refugee women.

30. The collective effort to prepare guidelines for the distribution of food and non-food items coordinated by the former Central Evaluation Section resulted in the completion of a draft document at the end of 1994. A second draft was subsequently prepared by the Emergency Preparedness and Response Section. This draft will be circulated within the Office before being discussed at a workshop, tentatively scheduled for October 1995 in Addis Ababa. The final document will take into account comments from WFP and from major NGOs and should be completed by the end of 1995.

V. WORK IN PROGRESS

31. A discussion paper on UNHCR's policy and practice regarding urban refugees is currently being finalized. The study assesses the appropriateness of current policy and practice and examines some of the principal problems experienced in UNHCR offices around the world. It presents a range of options to consider for the establishment of a more rational and humane approach to this small but complex area of UNHCR's work.

32. An evaluation of the Mozambique repatriation operation is under completion. The review examines the extent to which lessons learnt from previous evaluations were incorporated into the planning process for the Mozambique operation. It also reports on additional lessons learnt from this operation and examines the relevance of those lessons to the planning and implementation of repatriation programmes elsewhere in the world.

33. A full-fledged evaluation of the women victims of violence project in Kenya is being finalized. Significantly more detailed than the above mentioned conference room paper, this report is to serve as an internal management tool.

VI. EXTERNAL RELATIONS

34. The Inspection and Evaluation Service will continue collaborating with the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the United Nations Secretariat, in particular with its Central Evaluation and Monitoring and Inspection Units. As in the past, UNHCR will contribute occasional papers as well as exchange ideas and information with these offices. Furthermore, UNHCR continues to monitor the follow-up to the study undertaken by the Central Evaluation Unit in New York entitled In-depth Evaluation of the Programme on International Protection and Assistance to Refugees: Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (E/AC.51/1993/2).

35. The Service also maintains regular relations with the United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (JIU). It now acts as the focal point within the Office for responding to the queries received from JIU and prepares comments on JIU reports.

36. UNHCR continues cooperating closely with the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda initiated in the last quarter of 1994 by members of the OECD/Development Assistance Committee. In this regard, the Inspection and Evaluation Service was represented at the second meeting of the Evaluation's Steering Committee held in Copenhagen on 4 July 1995.

37. The Inspection and Evaluation Service plans to reinforce consultations with evaluation units in other multilateral and governmental bodies. To this end, the Inspector has begun meeting systematically with his counterparts in such bodies.